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# PROPHETIC CONTROVERSY NO. 8

Nauvoo, Ill., July 16, 1907.  
Editor Liahona:

In your issue of July 13th inst., I find a pretty sweeping article from your pen on page 91.

You say: "We might present quite a list of men who sought to supplant or succeed the prophet, Joseph Smith, as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but who DID NOT POSSESS THE NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS for the position, nor any DIVINE CALL, nor RIGHT to assume it; but we do not care to particularize by so doing.

"We might also cite proofs from the PERSONAL HISTORY OF EVERY ONE OF THEM that they were NOT FIT to lead the church, nor WORTHY OF THE CONFIDENCE OF ITS MEMBERS; but to do this is not necessary to our present purpose.

"Suffice it to say that NOT A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL whose name would properly appear on the list above referred to, were it, to be prepared, EVER MADE AN UTTERANCE, or accomplished an achievement from the day he first sought to gratify his ambition, to that on which he breathed his last breath, that MARKED HIM AS A TRUE PROPHET.

"Take EACH MAN whose name might properly be mentioned in this connection and study HIS BIOGRAPHY from the time he first began to plan for the gratification of his aspirations to the end of his life, and WHAT DID HE EVER SAY OR DO that was worth remembering? What PROOF DID HE EVER GIVE that the LORD HAD CALLED HIM? Prophets are known by their works, and the fulfillment of their predictions. WHAT WORKS were ever performed by ANY ONE OF THESE men, by which he may be known as a prophet? WHAT PHOPHECY DID ANY OF THEM EVER UTTER in the name of

the Lord, that was later fulfilled, or is ever likely to be?"

Friend B. F. Cummings, in reading over the above article, I can only come to one of two conclusions—either that you are densely ignorant of the calling, appointment and claims of James J. Strang, or else that you designedly try to keep your readers in the dark in relation to them.

I sincerely doubt whether the great majority of the prophets of God ever gave any more evidence of their calling and appointment than Mr. Strang did of his. If you have any doubts of this, you have only to throw open your columns for the free discussion of the question:

"WAS JAMES J. STRANG THE MAN APPOINTED OF GOD, TO SUCCEED JOSEPH SMITH IN THE PROPHETIC OFFICE?" And thus let both sides have a fair hearing and investigation. You and your readers may learn some things of importance which I presume, from the nature of your very sweeping assertions, you never knew before. I think you will find some things "worth remembering." You may find that Mr. Strang DID "possess the NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POSITION," and that he DID GIVE FULL EVIDENCE of the "DIVINE CALL" to THAT OFFICE, and the "right to assume it;" and that he did "achieve" some things that MARKED HIM as a TRUE PROPHET;" and that he did leave nothing awaiting to prove that he was a true prophet of God, and Joseph Smith's lawful successor.

The grand fact that he utterly silenced and vanquished every opponent who ever undertook to oppose any part or point in his claims and ministry, is no small evidence in his favor. And the further fact that he utterly demolished every argument

put forth by any other claimant to that office, is another pretty strong evidence in favor of his claims as a prophet of God. Those arguments are still in being, and if you or any other man can refute them, you are just the right man in the right place, and we will have to regard you as the ablest man in all the ranks of Mr. Strang's opposers.

Now we want you to make good your assertions or frankly acknowledge you have been misinformed in regard to Mr. Strang's claims and calling.

In this place it will be proper to call your attention to another paragraph on page 92. You remark:

"Again no true prophet who was ever called to hold the keys of a dispensation and to preside over the church of God, ever deigned to engage in a controversy with a rival upon the subject of his right of leadership. To present himself before the people with his message from the Lord and to invite all who chose to do so, to sustain and follow him, has been the course taken by every divinely authorized presiding prophet SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN. Wrangling over such a question as the right to lead the people of God, is nearly always a distinguishing characteristic of a false or fallen prophet—NEVER OF A TRUE ONE."

The above is positively surprising, to say the least of it! and resembles so closely the tactics of the man with stolen goods or counterfeit money on his person that an honest man can see through it at a glance.

Yes, I am positively surprised at this language! A man of any thought or reflection can only stand appalled at its monstrosity. As who is he who is at all acquainted with the history of the prophets of God who does not know that they, of all men, were endowed with arguments by the spirit of God to defend their right to lead the people against any and all odds? For John, the mighty forerunner of Jesus, says: "God gives not his spirit BY MEASURE to those he has sent." What for? To put down every argument, and all opposition to the cause he sends them to build up—their claims to the priesthood which holds the right to lead the church as well

as every other principle of doctrine taught by them. Accordingly, God says to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon: "Wherefore CONFOUND your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in PUBLIC and in PRIVATE; and inasmuch as ye are faithful, their shame shall be made manifest. Wherefore let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord."

Why, according to our friend of the Liahona, the above invitation commanded of the Lord was only evidence that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were "false or fallen prophets."

But again it is written: "And if any man shall lift his voice against you (Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon) he shall be confounded in mine own due time." (See Utah Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 71: 6-11).

How would this take place unless these men were furnished with sufficient argument and were commanded to make use of it to confound their enemy?

Nearly the whole Book of Jeremiah is a continuous pleading and contention with Israel, for he foresaw the destruction and desolation of that people in his day; so it was a constant warfare on his part, warning and pleading and contending with them to turn from their infamy and iniquity, but they derided and mocked him, and persecuted, and laid plans to destroy him, and refused him as a man sent to lead them, the people, if you please; and being utterly grieved and cast down with sorrow and affliction at their unbelief and hardness of heart, he cries out: "Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man OF STRIFE, and a man of CONTENTION to the whole earth. I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me." (Jer. 15: 10). Again: "Thou hast heard their reproach, Oh Lord, and all their imaginations against me. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their devices against me all the day. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up. I am their music. (Lam. 3: 61-66)."

All this came because he was commanded not only to rebuke Israel, but

various other nations.

But what about Nephi and Lehi? Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem for testifying against Israel's evil deeds, and his own life as well as that of his son Nephi, was endangered by his own sons, because of their reproof, and especially because they could not bear the idea of their younger brother being made their leader. All the prophets since the world began, knew right well that it was their right to lead the people, and if the people had hearkened to their pleadings, their reproofs, and their arguments and revelations they would have chosen them for their leaders, of course. Why not?

But what kind of a man was Moses? Did he have no warfare with Pharaoh? Did he say nothing about God sending him to lead the people? Did he never plead with rebellious Israel, with Corah, Dathan and Abiram, when they resisted his right to lead the people by the direction of the Almighty?

The principle upon which all prophets acted from the beginning was to PROMPTLY DEFEND when ANY PART OR POINT in their teachings and testimony were attacked or assailed. It did not matter who the attacking or assailing party were, whether kings or princes or potentates, and they soon learned that the message and the claims they brought were not to be trifled with. Witness Micaiah and Elijah when brought before Kings, and often their rebukes were terrible, and like sharp arrows in the hearts of the wicked and their opposers. Did not Micaiah engage in any controversy with his "rivals," the four hundred unauthorized prophets of Ahab? They told the King to go to war and that God would prosper him. Micaiah told him and them, if he ever returned in peace from that war. Then said he: "God has not spoken by me; hearken all ye people." Then the leader of the four hundred "rivals" or false prophets came and struck Micaiah on the cheek and asked: "Which way went the spirit of God from me to thee? Behold thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself."

Please read the 18th chapter of 2nd

Chronicles. I might point out many other cases among the prophets, but will now turn to the case of the Lord Jesus himself and see whether he ever DEIGNED (condescended) to engage in a controversy upon the subject of his rights to leadership. Why, the whole question in his day was: Was Jesus the Messiah? That is: Was he the promised anointed son of God, promised through all the holy prophets since the world began? To say that Jesus never got into a controversy throughout his ministry with any of his opposers upon the subject of his being the promised Messiah—the anointed son of God—is to argue that he was indifferent, whether the people knew that fact or not.

"I have come in my Father's name (authority) and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his OWN name (his own authority) him ye will receive." (John). And he said unto them: "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I say, therefore, unto you, ye shall die in your sins, for if ye believe not that I am he (the Messiah) ye shall die in your sins." (John 8: 23-4).

Jesus said unto them: "If God were your father ye would love me; ye are of your father, the devil, and the works of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." (Id. 44, 45).

What about pronouncing woes upon scribes and pharisees, lawyers, and hypocrites, telling them that they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men that they "neither entered in themselves nor suffered those who were entering, to go in?" What about his upsetting the tables of the money changers and other merchandise, and driving the owners of these things out of the temple with a whip, saying: "My house shall be a house of prayers for all people, but ye have made it a den of thieves? (See 8th chapter of John). This whole chapter is a very good example of the Saviour's condescension to debate, and



vindicate his right to lead the people. What do you think of it? Would it be right for God to send a man with a message of salvation and then listen to "rivals" and enemies of that message, opposing it continually and say nothing in its defense? Who among all the apostles and prophets of the Bible has ever acted in that way? Not one! In Elijah we have a most interesting example of the falsity of your very grave statement, that "no prophet who was ever called to hold the keys of a dispensation, and to preside over the church of God, ever deigned to engage in a controversy with a rival upon the subject of his right of leadership."

Here were the prophets of Baal, the "rivals" of Elijah the prophet, some four hundred and fifty in number, who were literally polluting and blighting and cursing the earth under the people's feet by their false teaching and idolatry, so that grim famine prevailed on the earth for three years and a half. At last, says Elijah, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

"I ONLY, remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets (rivals) are four hundred and fifty men." So he proposed that the God that answered by fire should be the God of Israel. A bullock was to be furnished either side; dressed, divided and laid on wood, and Baal's prophets began to call on him for an answer by fire, but although they cried and even cut themselves until the blood gushed out no answer came from Baal. And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them and said: "Cry aloud for he is a God; either he is talking or cursing, or he is in a journey or peradventure; he sleeps and must be waked." But no answer.

Elijah had a trench dug about his sacrifice, and had water thrown on it three times, till the trench overflowed. Then he prayed to the Lord and fire fell and consumed the sacrifice and licked up the water and wood instantly. So the people all cried out: "The Lord, he is the God: the Lord he is the God." Then Elijah said: "Take the prophets of Baal, let

not one of them escape." And they took them and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and slew them there.

Come now, friend Cummings, of the LIAHONA: Is all this only the evidence of a fallen or a false prophet? Do you call this merely "wrangling" over the "right to lead the church." Why, sir, the more I look at your description of true prophets, the more I must conclude that you are densely ignorant of the real characters of all true prophets, including Joseph Smith and James J. Strang.

I will give you here a quotation from the writings of Joseph Smith on the character of true prophets, and ask you what you think of it:

"For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed by an oath, that every one being ordained after THIS order and calling (the order held by Melchizedec, Moses and all the holy prophets since the world began) should have power by faith to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course, to PUT AT DEFIANCE the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to BREAK EVERY BAND, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will; SUBDUE PRINCIPALITIES and POWERS; and this by the will of the Son of God, which was from before the foundation of the world," etc. (See Inspired Translation of Bible by Joseph Smith; Gen. 14: 30-31).

If the proper position of a prophet of God is to sit comfortably in his arm chair after delivering his message, look on and calmly invite everybody to receive his message without a single rebuke or the confounding of an enemy when pitted against him, or his cause. I must say that there is a tremendous amount written for mere ornament and display that amounts to just nothing at all, or the merest delusion.

The Utah Mormon leaders have always been so destitute of anything in the shape of evidence justifying their usurped and unholy careers, they have therefore thought that the less said in their defense was the safest course to pursue. Hence it is not to be wondered at that they try

to twist the life and characters of the true prophets of God in to conformity with their own. Nor is it to be wondered at that they charge their followers not to contend with those who contend against them as usurpers and false leaders.

Stephen was not so instructed by the Saviour or else he would not have said to rebellious Israel: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcized in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have shown before the coming of the just one, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it." (Acts, chapter 7).

Neither was Paul instructed in that way, who said to the crafty Sorcerer bar—Jesus: "Oh full of all subtilty and mischief, thou child of the devil; thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." (Acts 13: 9-13).

Moreover, it is written of him that he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of THREE MONTHS, DISPUTING and PERSUADING the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and that he "disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus." (Acts 19: 8, 9).

Neither was the presiding elder over the church of Ephesus instructed in that way; for Jesus gives him praise because he had tested them who said they were apostles, by the word of God, "and found them liars." (Rev. 2: 1, 2).

The promise of Jesus to his disciples was: "I will give you a mouth which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." And so their whole history proves. But the best Mr. Strang's enemies have to say when vanquished in argument is: "I am not posted," and the worst of it all is, there is nobody to post them in that direction, and NOBODY CAN.

Joseph Smith says: "The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God they considered to be false prophets;

and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and they had to hide themselves in deserts, dens and caves of the earth; and though THE MOST HONORABLE MEN OF THE EARTH, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, whilst they cherished, honored and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors and the BASEST OF MEN."

Now from all this it is no great wonder that the gentiles or the world should reject Joseph Smith and James J. Strang as false prophets; but when a man who has given such overwhelming proof of his call and appointment, according to the law of God, to succeed Joseph Smith in the prophetic office as Mr. Strang has, is deliberately rejected by Mormons, one can only say that the Mormons are by far the greater unbelievers of the two, and their condemnation, if they die in their sins, will be sevenfold greater than that of the world. These Mormons do precisely with Mr. Strang as the sectarians have done with Joseph Smith and his testimonies. They have regarded Joseph Smith as dealing with lies from his Mormon cradle to his Mormon and martyr's grave. The greater the truths he brought forth and the greater the predictions, and the more accurately they were fulfilled the greater the villian they regarded him as being. To reason with them on these things is vain, and exactly so it is with nearly the whole great body of the Mormons in relation to Mr. Strang. They can see nothing in one of the greatest miracles "achieved" in the discovery and bringing to light at the mouth and eyes and ears of FOUR FAITHFUL WITNESSES, the Voree Record, and Mr. Strang's translating it by means of the Urim and Thummum. Nothing in those plates being tested by a body of learned men, who could translate words here and there of it, and Mr. Strang's supplying the lacking words and sentences, and their pronouncing the translation correct and entirely in Mr. Strang's favor. Nothing in his silencing and putting to shame the whole body of the ablest of the Mormon leaders who ever undertook to assail any part of his claims or works.

Nothing in his translating THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF THE LORD by means of the Urim and Thummim from the plates of Laban, and the handling and examination of those plates by six witnesses. Nothing in the great fact that "THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH is appointed by revelation, and that that revelation is to come through Joseph the seer, and could come lawfully through no other, and that Mr. Strang alone received that revelation, and proved it by overwhelming evidence.

No! No! They can see nothing "WORTH REMEMBERING" in not only those things but in many other things which can not be mentioned here.

Who has ever discovered anything wrong in the teachings of Mr. Strang, either by revelation given him, or translations made by him? Look them over, and when you find anything in his works in conflict with anything revealed to any former prophet or apostle, the prophet Joseph Smith included, let him point it out.

Joseph, the seer, in all his revelations and translations taught in harmony with all the prophets since the days of Adam. Mr. Strang's revelations and translations did the same thing. If all this does not prove a divine call on the part of these two men and their capability to lead the church, then we know not who ever was called or capable of leading the church of God in any past age.

We know not who "possessed the necessary qualifications" to lead the church, or who had "the right to assume" that leadership, or "who were worthy of the confidence of its members," or that ever did "anything that marked him as a true prophet."

And as you ask, "What prophecy did any of them;" that is, ANY of the claimants of the successorship of Joseph Smith ever utter in the name of the Lord that was later fulfilled or ever likely to be," might we not very forcibly return the same question to you? Mr. Strang DID predict, and very clearly too, the expulsion of the Mormons from Nauvoo, a good while before that event ever happened, and some of the leaders laid the letter in which this prophecy was contained

on the floor, and "danced on it their defiance of the prediction." (See Prophetic Controversy by Mr. Strang, page 18). Two years did not pass around till the prediction was fulfilled.

It would make this tract much longer than it is intended to notice all the prophecies uttered by Mr. Strang, and fulfilled too, very pointedly. In 1850 Mr. Strang and some thirty others were taken prisoners and brought to Detroit to be tried on the charge of treason, robbing the United States mail, counterfeiting, etc. When they were all aboard the steamer that brought them from Beaver Island to Detroit, U. S. Prosecuting Attorney George C. Bates, says to Mr. Strang: "Now Strang—swearing a profane oath—we have got you where we want you, and you may as well make up your mind that you are all going to states prison." Mr. Strang shook his finger at him and said: "If you get a single soul of these men into prison, then God has not spoken by me. You are a sign seeker and I will give you this for a sign." Suffice it to say that perjury and perfidy was the order at this trial, and though the papers had caused them to be prejudiced and fore-doomed they were, every one, honorably acquitted after a few minutes' delay, by the jury.

Mr. Strang always taught that Brigham Young was an imposter, a usurper, and was utterly destitute of the Keys of Mysteries and revelations which belong always to the prophetic office. (Salt Lake Ed. Doc. & Cov., Sec. 84: 19 to 22. Lamoni Ed., Sec. 80: 1; Sec. 83: 3. First Book of Nephi, Chap. 5: 47). And every line of his history shows both him and his successors to be utterly destitute of the prophetic gifts; that they have never seen the sealed records of either Nephi or Laban, or any other sealed record. That they have never had the ministry of angels; never saw the Urim and Thummim, and never revealed any mystery nor translated anything from the sacred records of the past; yet all the above references show plainly that all these are handed down from one prophet to another. So if Mr. Strang did not



have these things, then all those testimonies have turned out to be false. So the Liahona may choose either position. If you are afraid of your cause, don't talk so broadly and loudly next time. Meantime don't forget the admonition: "Wherefore confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private, etc,"

if you are following a true prophet, and bring forth your strong reasons against the God of Joseph Smith and James J. Strang, if you have them.

Truly,

WINGFIELD WATSON,

Burlington, Wis.

July 20, 1907.

